



*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 5-22-07*****

From the Office of the Director of Health

Public Urged to Use Healthy Swimming Practices

As Greene County residents head to pools, lakes, waterways and swimming holes this Memorial Day weekend, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department urges healthy swimming behaviors to protect against recreational water illnesses.

“Recreational water illnesses (RWIs) are the various illnesses caused by germs that can contaminate virtually all recreational waters, including pools, water parks, spray decks, rivers, lakes, and even oceans,” says epidemiologist John Bos. “Swimming in a well-maintained swimming pool will reduce your likelihood of developing a RWI. However, some germs like the parasite *Cryptosporidium*, (“Crypto”) are resistant to chlorine and can live in properly chlorinated pools for days. Crypto, like many other RWI causing germs, can be introduced into recreational waters by animals or by people, especially swimmers who are ill with diarrhea. It then spreads to other swimmers who swallow contaminated water.”

Each year nearly 2,000 Americans become ill following outbreaks of waterborne illnesses, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Young children, senior adults, pregnant women and immunosuppressed persons are especially at risk for recreational water illnesses, but even healthy swimmers can be affected. This year, the third annual National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week, May 21 – 28, seeks to highlight the importance of preventing recreational water illness with the following healthy swimming behaviors:

- Do not swim when you have diarrhea.
- Do not swallow swimming water or get swimming water in your mouth.
- Shower or bathe before swimming to wash germs off your body.
- Wash your hands after using the bathroom, after changing diapers, after swimming and before eating.
- Take children on frequent bathroom breaks and change diapers often.
- Change children’s diapers in a bathroom, not at poolside.
- Do not swim in streams, lakes or rivers when the water is cloudy, or after a heavy rain when wastewater runoff is at its highest.

Next week the Springfield-Greene County Health Department and its partners will begin testing water from local river and stream swimming areas for coliform bacteria. The resulting *E. coli* levels for each test site will be posted weekly on the health department Web site at <http://health.springfieldmogov.org>.

Media Contact:

Jaci McReynolds, Public Health Information Specialist (417) 830-9511 cell

###